

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEHRAN 04061 211452Z

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, 84, IZ

SUBJECT: IRAN/IRAQ RELATIONS

1. DURING AUDIENCE FOR CHAIRMAN RAY OF ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION MORNING OF MAY 21, SHAHREFERRED TO DIFFICULTIES HE IS HAVING WITH SOVIET UNION IN GETTING THEM TO ACCEPT HIGHER PRICES FOR GAS DELIVERED AT ASTARA. SOVIETS SIMPLY DECLINE TO REPLY TO IRAN'S INITIATIVES. THIS PHENOMENON LED SHAH TO COMMENT THAT AS SOVIETS BECOME MORE DEEPLY INVOLVED WITH IRAQ, THEY SEEM TO BE PULLING AWAY FROM IRAN. IN PRIVATE TALK AFTER DEPARTURE OF CHAIRMAN RAY, SHAH RETURNED TO THIS SUBJECT AND ASKED RHETORICALLY WHAT THE LIBYANS ARE DOING WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND VICE VERSA. HE OPINED THAT NOTHING COULD BE WORSE FOR THE AREA THAN A GANGING UP OF LIBYA, IRAQ AND SYRIA UNDER SOVIET AEGIS AND CONTROL. HE COMMENTED, "IT WOULD BE WORSE THAN THE RED CRESCENT THREAT." HE THEN MUSED OUT LOUD, "I DOUBT THAT SYRIA IS GOING TO GO WITH IRAQ AND LIBYA.MY IMPRESSION REINFORCED IN A RECENT TALK WITH A VISITING SYRIAN OFFICIAL IS THAT SYRIA WANTS TO BREAK LOOSE FROM SOVIET CONTROL. "IN ANY EVENT," SAID THE SHAH, "I BECOME MORE AND MORE CONVINCED EVERY DAY THAT I MUST PURSUE MY ARMS EQUIPMENT PROGRAM. IT IS NOT AS THOUGH WE COULD ONLY AFFORD GUNS OR BUTTER. WE CAN AFFORD BOTH. AND I FEEL SURE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL BE PROBING AT US BEFORE LONG JUST THE WAY THEY ARE NOW QUITE OPENLY TRYING TO UPSET THE SYRIAN/ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS."

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HELMS

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